



**America's Voices on Border Security**  
*Excerpts from Today's House Subcommittee Hearing on Amnesty  
Provisions in the Reid-Kennedy Immigration Bill*

The House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Claims is holding a hearing today examining whether the Reid-Kennedy Senate immigration bill will replicate the failed amnesty program of 1986. Below are excerpts from the prepared testimony of some of the witnesses who are testifying.

**James R. Edwards, Jr., Ph.D.**

**Adjunct Fellow, Hudson Institute**

**Co-author, *The Congressional Politics of Immigration Reform***

"(A)llow me to offer a common-sense, conventional definition of "amnesty."  
Amnesty is the government forgiving all people or certain classes of people for certain unlawful acts they are guilty of."

"Black's Law Dictionary explicitly cites the 1986 IRCA (Immigration Reform and Control Act) as an example of amnesty. And by a normal person's reasonable judgment, the legalization provisions in S. 2611 and similar arrangements in other legislation can only be described as amnesty."

"Amnesty in effect rewards lawbreakers for their lawbreaking."

"In the immigration context, granting illegal aliens amnesty diminishes the honorable conduct of the many legal immigrants who abided by the law and persisted through the daunting process; amnesty of illegal aliens rewards their dishonorable, disorderly, lawless conduct in a highly public manner that effectively insults legal immigrants."

"Comparing the experience of 1986's supposed "one-time only" legalization with the Senate-passed amnesty and its likely consequences should lead dispassionate observers to conclude that S. 2611 would repeat past errors ... The Senate

amnesty would condemn the United States to the same harmful consequences that IRCA caused. Only now, its effects would be far, far worse.”

“We need to pursue enforcement first... We need a border fence, vastly expanded expedited removal, meaningful, rigorous employer sanctions starting with the worst offenders, mandatory electronic employment verification of all workers, and empowering state and local law enforcement with the federal cooperation they need.”

“Given the IRCA disaster, the Reid-Kennedy amnesty is out of touch with reality and lacks common sense. By contrast, H.R. 4437 takes a far more sensible approach.”

**Steven A. Camarota, Director of Research**  
**Center for Immigration Studies**

“In many ways the fiscal, labor market, administrative, and other problems S. 2611 would create closely parallel the problems created by the last amnesty, which was passed in 1986.”

“Any legislation that does not require those who break the law to abide by it, but instead suspends the normal penalty and in some way changes the law to accommodate the violator is an amnesty. An amnesty in the immigration system is any change that allows people who would otherwise be subject to deportation to stay in the country.”

“One of the reasons there is so much resistance to the Senate’s amnesty ... is that it seems unfair to those who play by the rules. As in 1986, many observers have pointed out that when you reward law breaking, you make legal immigrants who have played by the rules, and in some cases have waited many years to come to our country, look like fools for taking America’s law seriously.”

“A 1997 report from the INS found that there was a surge of new illegal immigration when the 1986 amnesty went into effect. ... . According to the 1997 INS report the number of new illegal immigrants arriving increased by 44 percent between 1987 at the start of the legalizations and 1989 the height of the legalizations.”

“The Senate bill also repeats a key mistake of having the amnesty come before enforcement is actually implemented. In the Senate plan, the amnesty is in no way connected to or contingent upon enforcement.”

“The 1986 amnesty clearly facilitated terrorism. Mahmud Abouhalima, a leader of the 1993 Trade Center bombing, was legalized as a seasonal agricultural worker as part IRCA, even though he drove a cab in New York City.”

“A Center for Immigration Studies report found that in just the first ten years after IRCA passed, the difference between the taxes the legalized illegals paid and the costs they created was a negative \$79 billion borne by American taxpayers.”

### **Phyllis Schlafly**

#### **President, Eagle Forum**

“Americans are basically a law-abiding people and they believe our government has betrayed us by its failure to enforce immigration law.”

“But “comprehensive” has become a word as offensive as amnesty because we have figured out that it is just a cover for a plan to repeat the mistakes of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, known as Simpson-Mazzoli. That was truly a comprehensive law which combined amnesty with promises of border security and sanctions on employers who hired illegal aliens. The illegal aliens got their amnesty -- but we did not get border security or employer sanctions. There was massive fraud, and the illegal population quadrupled.”

“If you have water in your basement, Plan A must be to stop more water from coming in -- before you deal with the water already in the basement. Plan A is border security only, House bill 4437. We thank Chairman Sensenbrenner and the 88% of Republican House Members who voted for it.”

“The Simpson-Mazzoli Act is a good model of how any type of legalization or ‘amnesty light’ will be fraught with fraud. That 1986 Act was expected to amnesty one million people; it turned into three million.”

“Failing to close our border to illegals means giving up on the war on drugs because most illegal drugs come over our southern border and then are shipped all over the United States. Drugs smugglers armed with automatic weapons,

global-positioning units and night-vision scopes have become increasingly aggressive in protecting their illicit cargoes. Attacks on our Border Patrol agents have risen fivefold in the past year.”

“It is self-evident that the Senate bill or any so-called “comprehensive” immigration bill will be a rerun of the 1986 Simpson-Mazzoli mistake. The American people are demanding border security now and before any discussion of other legislation.”

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